



The Catalan-language press from 1868 to 1939

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ABSTRACT

The cultural *Renaixença* (Renaissance) movement in Catalonia spurred the swift development of the press in Catalonia. The journalism that took off during that period laid the groundwork for the ensuing stages, which showed extraordinary vitality spanning a period from 1868 to 1939. At the same time, this period can be divided into two stages: a “transition”, which ranged from the restoration of the monarchy (1876) until the end of World War I (1918), and a stage of “modernisation”, which approximately covers the years between the world wars (1919-1939). However, the Franco dictatorship destroyed the role that journalised once played as an indispensable tool in the advancement of the discontinuous process of civil and cultural reform in Catalonia.

KEYWORDS: press, journalism, Catalonia, freedom, Republic

BACKGROUND

We should first present several earlier historical references before describing the evolution of journalism in Catalonia in the period spanning from the September Revolution of 1868 – which for the first time, without the earlier limitations, embraced the cause of freedom of the press – and the collapse of 1939 – with the Republican defeat and the wholesale ensconcing of the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco Bahamonde, which imposed unyielding, absolute and totalitarian censorship over the entire Spanish and Catalan journalism system.

The tradition of journalism in Catalonia dates back far into the past. Barcelona and Valencia were the first cities on the Iberian Peninsula to have workshops equipped with the model of printing press invented by the German Johannes Gutenberg in around 1450. Just as in the Central European countries, from the beginning this new method for reproducing texts paved the way for the appearance of the first initiatives and activities which we could classify as journalistic.

The oldest leaflet published in Catalonia that has been catalogued by researchers to date in the official periodicals archive is entitled “*Còpia de les noves d'Itàlia*” (Copy of the news from Italy) and dates from 1557.¹

The first daily, long-lasting journalistic publication issued in Catalonia was the *Diario de Barcelona*.² The first

issue of this newspaper came out on the 1st of October 1792. On the 28th of January 1994, two years after it celebrated its bicentennial, it closed after being, until that day, the oldest newspaper published on the European continent and one of the oldest in the world.

The first newspaper published in the Catalan language was the satirical weekly *Lo Pare Arcàngel*, which appeared in 1841. Despite its modest aims, presentation and contents, according to the experts, *Lo Pare Arcàngel* shows very significant features of an “incipient *Renaixentista* orientation”.³ The second Catalan-language newspaper was *Lo Verdader Català* (1843), which was subtitled “Religious, political, scientific and literary magazine”. It was biweekly and only six issues were published.⁴ The first mouthpiece for Catalonia’s literary *Renaixença* was Francesc Pelai Briz’s *Lo Gay Saber* (1868-1883), a newspaper that was openly geared towards the Catalan, Mallorcan and Valencian literati.

Romanticism in general and the Catalan cultural *Renaixença* in particular spurred the earliest development of the press in Catalonia.

The history of the Catalan-language press in the 19th century shows phenomena equivalent to the ones that prompted the evolution of European journalism during the same period.

We can see a clear hegemony of the opinion newspaper model, also called the doctrinal press, which is characterised by the predominance of contents featuring the argumentative genres (articles, editorials, critiques, journalistic essays), and the literary or entertainment press (serials or serial novels, poetry collaborations, fictional prose).

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The professional thinking of Catalan editors and journalists, just like their counterparts everywhere, was inspired by “doctrinairism”, a current of opinion that justified and stimulated each newspaper’s and author’s commitment to certain political, moral, economic, social, cultural, philosophical or religious ideas.

This set of unique features within a broader concept of journalism covers a long historical phase which is known today as the “stage of ideological journalism” in the evolution of the modern press.⁵

Within the context of this broad scene that characterised the European press during almost the entire 19th century, Catalonia had a few unique features of its own. The major ideological debates, political struggles and social and economic contradictions that emerged in different parts of Europe after the French Revolution fostered the use of the press as a weapon of war, as an essential instrument in dialectic combats.

The emergence of Catalan nationalism via the revival of the identity of language, history, law and culture spurred by the *Renaixença* linked up with the continent-wide trend, yet in Catalonia it took shape as a movement with unique natural features.⁶

The press and journalism that took off during that period laid the groundwork for the ensuing stages, which showed extraordinary vitality spanning a period between 1868 and 1939. This is a period which, in turn, can be divided into two stages: a “transition”, which ranged from the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy (1876) until the end of World War I (1918), and a period of what we can consider “modernisation”, which approximately covers the years between the world wars and was concurrent with mass culture as illiteracy was rendered a thing of the past (1919-1939).⁷

Both of these two stages in the history of the Catalan-language press encompass a period in which business and professional publishing initiatives proliferated all over Catalonia, but particularly locally and in the *comarques* (counties), including publications by sectors and associations and specialised publications.

Catalonia is one of the European nations which has witnessed the largest number of newspaper titles of all stripes. This extraordinary deployment of journalistic capacities and activities is necessarily reflected in the abundance of scholars of the press, both professionals and amateurs, and of newspaper collectors who have focused their attention on these phenomena of social communication.

The Catalan periodicals school – fed at first by these individual, voluntary initiatives, which included illustrious pioneers –⁸ achieved a high methodological level thanks to the exemplary Library School founded by Enric Prat de la Riba’s Mancomunitat de Catalunya in 1914, which reached notable academic maturity in the latter years of the period covered in this article.⁹

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND THE PROFESSIONAL TRANSITION

The September Revolution of 1868 opened up the period with the most freedom of press and printing in the 19th century. The *Sexenni Democràtic* (Six Years of Democracy, 1868-1874) which got underway that year began with the elimination of all restrictions on journalistic activities and publishing. However, the subsequent governments would limit and even suspend this freedom, especially upon the republican and federalist insurrections of 1869 and the cantonalist uprisings and new Carlist War of 1873.¹⁰ Carlism was an anti-liberal, counter-revolutionary movement with a largely grassroots base.

Years later, the societal spread of the spirit of the Catalan *Renaixença* and the first political and constitutional stability stemming from the restoration of the Spanish monarchy in 1876 led to the founding of Spanish-language newspapers which would consolidate a solid journalistic tradition in 19th century Catalonia that would extend into the 20th century. Publications from this period include *El Correo Catalán*, founded in 1876, initially traditionalist and shuttered in 1985; *El Noticiero Universal*, founded in 1888 and closed in 1985; and *La Vanguardia*, founded in 1881 and still operating, with two editions, Catalan and Spanish, since May 2011.

However, until the early 20th century the most influential newspaper in Catalonia was the *Diario de Barcelona*, directed for almost 40 years by Joan Mañé i Flaquer (1823-1901), the most celebrated Catalan journalist of the 19th century and the author of the most widely read column by the liberal, regionalist bourgeoisie in his day, who read his articles as if he were an infallible oracle.

Catalan-language newspapers began to appear in this period as well. The first out was the *Diari Català* (1879-1881) promoted by Valentí Almirall (1841-1904), the most prominent Catalan journalist in the late 19th century.¹¹ After that, the newspaper by Pere Aldavert and Àngel Guimerà, *La Renaixensa* (1882-1905), was launched, which served as the mouthpiece for the *Unió Catalanista* after 1891.¹² It was unable to withstand the competition from *La Veu de Catalunya* (1899-1936), the most important Catalan-language newspaper from the first quarter of the 20th century and the official mouthpiece of the *Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya* party founded in 1901.¹³ During the first quarter of the 20th century, the *Lliga Regionalista*, conservative in bent, was the most powerful, organised and stable of the democratic parties in Catalonia, and in 1933 it adopted the name of *Lliga Catalana*. The rival and somehow antagonist of the *La Veu de Catalunya* was the newspaper *El Poble Català* (1906-1918), which was Catalan republican and nationalist in bent and successively run by Joan Ventosa i Calvell, Francesc Rodon, Pere Coromines and Ignasi Ribera Rovira, with Gabriel Alomar as its most notable ideologue.¹⁴

At the turn of the century, the Catalan press gained ground as an early, fairly decentralised regional commu-



FIGURE 1. The newspaper *El Poble Català* from the 5th of September 1906. This newspaper was the leftist Catalanist alternative to the newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya*.

nication system with the birth of local and *comarca*-wide newspapers which remained operating until the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939. Many Catalan cities generated their own newspaper systems that reproduced the Barcelona model on their scale in terms of both the variety of contents and the influence they exerted in their respective geographic areas.¹⁵

The most prominent examples are the following: in the city of Girona, *Diario de Gerona* (1888–1936) and *El Autonomista* (1895–1939); in Reus, the capital of the *comarca* of Baix Camp within the province of Tarragona, the *Diario de Reus* (1859–1938) and *Las Circunstancias* (1874–1936); in the city of Tarragona proper, the *Diario de Tarragona* (1853–1939); in Sabadell, one of the capitals of the *comarca* El Vallès Occidental within the province of Barcelona, the *Revista de Sabadell* (1886–1935); in the city of Lleida, *El País* (1878–1937); in Mataró, the capital of the *comarca* of El Maresme within the province of Barcelona, the *Diario de Mataró* (1895–1936); and in Vilanova i la Geltrú, the capital of the *comarca* of El Garraf within the province of Barcelona, the *Diario de Villanueva y la Geltrú* (1850–1936).

In the early 20th century, the general newspaper model began to take shape following the prototypes of newspapers which had become popular in the English-speaking cultures since the second half of the previous century, according to the pattern exemplified by *The Times* of London.

The newspaper model was introduced later in Catalonia because of the temporal extent of the social climate of political tensions, which is always fertile ground for opinion, ideology and party newspapers. It was further delayed because of the slow arrival of the new techniques and infrastructures linked to communications (railroad, telegraph, telephone, roll printing, linotype and photography), which fostered the industrial and commercial conception of corporate or politically independent newspapers – also called the commercial or mercantile press – based primarily on advertisements and the exploitation of the latest news and major events as their raw material.

The decline of the *Diario de Barcelona* – which had been hegemonic in public opinion in the 19th century – and the gradual upsurge of *La Vanguardia*, a prototype of these new industrial newspaper formulas, are two interconnected phenomena which are representative of all the changing trends in the Catalan press.¹⁶

The journalistic genres and styles evolved in parallel to – and even anticipated – the changes in the hegemonic newspaper model. The genuine Catalan tradition of the chronicle, about which we could cite remote, indirect historical forerunners in the successful historiographic contributions of the great Catalan mediaeval chroniclers,¹⁷ which had been revived by Robert Robert (1830–1873) in the realm of political journalism, shifted to the field of modern war journalism with the outstanding reports by Víctor Balaguer (1824–1901), a correspondent sent to

cover the Second Italian War of Independence in 1859, and his fellow Valencian Joaquim Mola (1822-1882), another correspondent for the same war. Yet another Valencian, Francesc Peris Mencheta (1844-1916), reported from the combat fronts in the Third Carlist War (1872-1876), and Sadurní Ximénez (1853-1933) had an agitated, turbulent experience as a press correspondent in the last Carlist War, in the skirmish between Russia and Turkey in 1877-1878 and in the First Italo-Ethiopian War in 1894-1896.

The direct teachings of Mañé i Flaquer somehow influenced the generation of Catalan Modernisme, those journalists who reached their professional maturity at the turn of the century. At that time, diverse avenues of evolution and innovative experiences converged: the exercise of advanced criticism in Joan Sardà (1851-1898) and Josep Yxart (1853-1895), the updating of Costumbrism in Raimon Casellas (1855-1910) and the onerous constancy of political and social columns penned by Joan Maragall (1860-1911), Miquel dels Sants Oliver (1864-1920) and Gabriel Alomar (1873-1941).

Modernisme arrived with the cultural magazine *L'Avenç*, founded by Jaume Massó i Torrents, with a first period between 1881 and 1884 and a second one from 1889 to 1893 with Ramon Casas Carbó as his partner. At that time, an innovative printing press, a bookstore, an influential literary roundtable and a publisher by the same name were also founded under the aegis of the magazine, the latter which went on to publish the most important collection of classic pocket paperbacks of the age: the Biblioteca Popular de L'Avenç. The continuation of *L'Avenç* was *Catalònia* (1898-1900).¹⁸ However, the Modernista magazine by antonomasia was *Joventut* (1900-1906), overseen by Lluís Via, which also had a library that published some of the most characteristic literary works of the movement until 1914.¹⁹ Another high-quality Modernista magazine was *Pèl & Ploma* (1899-1903) by Ramon Casas and Miquel Utrillo.

Yet another crucial development in the Catalan press at the turn of the century was the prominence gained by the journalistic dimension of politician Enric Prat de la Riba (1870-1917), the first president of the pre-autonomous body called the Mancomunitat de Catalunya (1914). Prat de la Riba updated the style of political articles, which he injected with vigour and naturalism.²⁰

The last great historical personality in the political journalism of that period was Antoni Rovira i Virgili (1882-1949), the author of opinion pieces which stood out for the lucidity of their interpretations and their expository clarity.

Narrative and descriptive journalistic prose in the Catalan language had achieved levels of functionalism and literary worthiness years earlier in the travel stories (around North Africa, the Near East, Central Europe and Russia) by Jacint Verdaguer (1845-1902). Verdaguer was a poet and priest who was also noted for the quality of his series of articles entitled "En defensa pròpia" (1895-1897),



FIGURE 2. Masthead of the magazine *Joventut* (any 1905). The artistic quality of this Modernista magazine is outstanding.

a series that could be positively compared to other great monuments of combat, polemical and defence journalism so characteristic of that period, such as the famous campaign by Émile Zola regarding the "affaire Dreyfus" (1898).

Another eminent poet, Joan Maragall (1860-1911), in some ways marked the pinnacle in the evolution of the best in Catalan column-writing. However, his critical, unyielding stances on many of the social and ideological positions of the Catalan bourgeoisie, which was in the minority among the intellectuals of his day, prevents us from claiming that his journalistic body of work showed the same influence over public opinion that Mañé i Flaquer's work had shown. Even today, the trilogy of articles that Maragall wrote as a result of what was called the Setmana Tràgica (Tragic Week) in Catalonia in 1909 ("Ah! Barcelona", "La ciutat del perdó" and "L'església cremada") are a model of ethical, honest, committed journalism.

Early expressions of slightly more advanced forms of news journalism blossomed in the Catalan press in those years, such as a few pieces by Pere Coromines (1870-1939), who has been regarded as a foretaste of the future precise investigative reporting in English-language newspapers.

However, the kind of column-writing that had become popular in the previous period still dominated in the so-

cial and professional consideration of Catalan journalism during the first few decades of the 20th century.

Within this broad genre of column-writing, the most original style variation among the first generation of Catalan Noucentisme came from Eugeni d'Ors (1881-1954), whose pen name was Xènius. For fourteen years, he kept up the newspaper section of his "Glosari" with contributions that still earn positive citations in treatises and manuals of modern rhetoric and literary analysis.²¹

In this generation, d'Ors also highlighted the journalistic efforts of stylists and critics who climbed the last few rungs in the transition to modernity in writings for the press, including Jaume Bofill i Mates (1878-1933), Carles Rahola (1881-1939), Josep Carner (1884-1970) and Alexandre Plana (1889-1940). That period also witnessed the first notable signs of the new scientific journalism, with cases like the astronomer Josep Comas i Solà (1868-1937), the philosopher Joaquim Xirau (1895-1946) and the economist Joan Crexells (1896-1926).

After 1922, the Barcelona newspaper *La Publicidad* became Catalanised by the intellectuals of the new party, Acció Catalana, which was extremely critical of the pragmatic moderation of Francesc Cambó's Lliga Regionalista. This newspaper, whose quality was extraordinarily high, lasted until January 1939 and attracted a readership comparable to that of *La Veu de Catalunya*. Its prestige and influence even survived the election rout of the political group that inspired it during the Republican period.

The *Revista de Catalunya* played a prominent role in the realm of culture. Initially overseen by Antoni Rovira i Virgili between 1924 and 1929, it was reissued in 1930 under the leadership of Ferran Soldevila and lasted until 1934. Its third period got underway in 1938 under the sponsorship of the new Institució de les Lletres Catalanes. It was an intellectual magazine, yet with an efficient desire to be popular as well. It was reissued in Barcelona in 1986 under the leadership of the recently deceased Max Cahner.²²

THE SATIRICAL, CHILDREN'S AND WOMEN'S PRESS

During all the periods mentioned here, satirical Catalan-language magazines had a very vigorous presence. The first one was *Un Tros de Paper* (1865). A longer-lasting weekly was the popular *La Campana de Gràcia* (1870-1934), which in one of its government shut-downs morphed into *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* (1872-1939). They were both independent republican, anticlerical magazines addicted to a cross-cutting Catalanism since 1906 and critical of the centre-left.²³ At that time, Catalonia boasted illustrators the likes of Joan Llaverias, Ricard Opisso, Josep Costa (aka Picarol), Melcior Niubó (aka Niv), Feliu Elias (aka Apa) and Junceda. Writers like Santiago Rusiñol, Prudenci Bertrana, Gabriel Alomar, Màrius Aguilar and Antoni Rovira i Virgili contributed to these



FIGURE 3. *Campana de Gràcia*. This grassroots humoristic magazine, which had a republican, anti-clerical orientation, first appeared in 1870 and lasted until 1934.

popular magazines. The combat press tended to have a straw man as a leader, a false director who, in exchange for monetary compensation, suffered from the trials and imprisonment when the newspaper received sanctions. *Cu-Cut!* (1902-1912) was a satirical magazine sympathetic to the Lliga Regionalista, and in 1905 it was attacked by soldiers from the Barcelona garrison, as was the newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya*.²⁴

Another Catalanist satirical magazine, *La Tralla* (1903-1907), is from the same period; it suffered from numerous government shut-downs and sanctions, but it was revived between 1922 and 1923. The magazines *Cuca Fera* (1917) and *El Borinot* (1923-1927) round out the scene. One very incisive Catalanist magazine was *L'Estevet* (1921-1923) by Manuel Carrasco i Formiguera, which suffered from pressure because of a joke regarded as offensive to the Army. *Papitu* (1908-1937), a leftist Catalan magazine directed by artist Feliu Elias (Apa) and writer Francesc Pujols, had a longer life. It eventually evolved towards the erotic-satirical vein and was extremely popular.²⁵ However, the most famous weekly of the Catalan satirical press in the Republican period was *El Be Negre* (1931-1936). It followed the model of *Le Canard enchaîné*, employed Valentí Castanys as its caricaturist and was directed by Josep



FIGURE 4. Masthead of *La Veu de Catalunya* from the 13th of March 1911. The newspaper did not hide its enthusiasm over the election victory of the Lliga Regionalista, the party for which it served as the official mouthpiece.



FIGURE 5. Cover of the magazine *Feminal* (issue 18 from the 27th of September 1908). This magazine presented active women even in realms that were considered exclusive male domains.

M. Planas i Martí, a great reporter who was murdered in August 1936 by an anarchist patrol because of his earlier investigation into *pistoleros* (thugs engaged by management to intimidate active unionists) and terrorists. Implacable with all parties, even Acció Catalana Republicana, the party around which it orbited, suffered from its caustic humour.²⁶ Likewise, the humoristic press in Catalan was so successful in the field of sports journalism that the weekly *Xut* (1926-1936) appeared and even created a school of its own.

The newspapers tended to have a conventional women's section featuring fashion, beauty, the home and family; however, the first large illustrated magazine, *La Il·lustració Catalana*, which was issued in two different periods, the first from 1880 to 1894, was fully 19th century in orientation, and the second from 1904 to 1917, more modern, had a prestigious monthly for women, *Feminal*, which was directed by Carme Karr from 1907 until it disappeared in 1917. The magazine was attuned to the suffrage movement in the English-speaking world, yet without sharing its radicalism, and it showed models of women who played roles that until then had been the exclusive preserve of men in the professions, arts and sports.²⁷ More popular and longer-standing, albeit less innovative, was the Catalanist independent weekly *La Dona Catalana* (1925-1938), which was explicitly paired with *En Patufet*, the Catalan magazine with the largest readership of all time, with a long lifespan that lasted from 1904 until 1938. This latter magazine, the most important one for children and teens, with the writer Josep Maria Folch i Torres as its main figure after 1918, taught three generations of Catalans who were unable to learn their mother tongue at school how to read and write. At its peak, 65,000 issues were printed and its readership was calculated at 325,000.²⁸



FIGURE 6. *En Patufet* was the most popular and long-lasting of the Catalan-language magazines from prior to the Civil War of 1936.

THE JOURNALISTIC MODERNISATION BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The process of forthright modernisation of the Catalan press which got underway in the years of World War I, or the Great War, gained momentum in the 1930s, spurred by the regime of freedoms ushered in by the Spanish Second Republic in its Catalan dimension with the Republican Generalitat. However, this forward motion was halted for 40 years as a result of the Spanish Civil War from 1936-1939 and the long post-war period under the domination of the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco.

The most outstanding features of this late Catalan journalistic modernisation – which ran parallel to the process of partial linguistic Catalanisation of newspapers and magazines – are the following: 1) professional progress in the world of informative newspapers towards the most advanced formulas in the future of expository newspapers; 2) the appearance of magazines that were more open to new developments and cosmopolitanism; 3) the first journalistic uses of the new media (especially instantaneous photography and reporting with the adaptation of the lightweight Leica camera in professional work; documentary cinema and historical reconstruction influenced by the Soviet Sergei Eisenstein; and the radio as a means of popular dissemination, which would play a crucial role in the episodes of upheaval during that period); 4) the consolidation of several important publishing houses (the

most representative being *La Vanguardia*, owned by the Godó family); 5) the professional standardisation of the journalistic jobs of correspondent and special envoy; and 6) the incorporation of new writing techniques and new genres (investigative reporting, novelised reporting, long book-style reports, the interview, precision journalism, the literary sports chronicle, food journalism, reviews of discographies, fashion, jazz, flamenco, *varietés* and the circus, and film criticism) and the influx of the first women into a world that until then had been the exclusive realm of men. The Catalan-language press stood out not just in the field of culture but in all fields: the sports press, children's press, women's press and satirical press.

The phenomena of modernisation which could historically be observed in the Catalan press during the years between the two world wars matched what was happening elsewhere at the same time in other European journalistic cultures, such as in France, Germany and Sweden. The progress of linguistic Catalanisation of the press was clearly palpable at that time. While in 1927, within the hostile political framework of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, the daily press in Catalonia had eleven publications, by 1933 this figure had risen to 21, accounting for 25% of all newspapers printed, compared to 15% in 1927.

Para-literary or ideological, essay-based and doctrinal journalism, which had more or less dominated the entire European continent for years, was gradually replaced with functional, informative and more “rationalist” journalism as the hegemonic activity carried out by professional journalists; that is, it was superseded by communication techniques.²⁹

However, it was not until the end of the first dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera and during the Second Republic that more Catalan-language newspapers were founded: *La Nau* (1927-1933), *El Matí* (1929-1936), *Diari de Reus* (1930-1938), *L'Opinió* (1931-1934), *Diari d'Igualada* (1931-1936), *La Humanitat* (1931-1939), *La Veu del Vespre* (1933-1934), *L'Instant* (1935-1936), *Última Hora* (1935-1938) and *La Rambla. Esport i Ciutadania* (1936-1939). Catalanisation and modernisation were two inextricably intertwined communicative phenomena, especially at their peak between 1931 and 1936.³⁰ *L'Opinió* until 1933 and *La Humanitat* were the mouthpieces of the Esquerra Republicana, the party at the helm of the Generalitat de Catalunya.³¹

Two major newspapers from this historical period – *La Vanguardia* and *La Publicitat* – chose the strictly news-based model which they embraced as the recipe for presenting and giving content to the new journalism using the informative-interpretative prototype following the English-language model.

Likewise, the first Catalan attempts at newspapers following truly popular sensationalist models appeared in the 1930s (*L'Instant*, *Última Hora*), somehow linked to the new communicative universe that was being ushered in by the spread of the radio. However, these experiments in

the daily press were engulfed, like so many other things, by the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939.

Among weeklies and magazines issued less frequently, titles appeared during this period that excelled because of their social influence, their style targeted at different segments of the reading audience and their quality, according to the standards accredited in different European journalistic cultures. They included *D'Ací D'Allà* (1918-1936) and *Mirador* (1929-1936).

The short-lived magazine *Imatges* (1930) was another very worthy example of the desire to align the products of the Catalan press with international formulas, in this case with France's *Vu*, which served as its inspiration in terms of the preferred topics of journalistic attention and how they were treated.

D'Ací D'Allà stood out for its elegance, its tone, its innovative approach and its cosmopolitanism, especially during the years when Carles Soldevila was at the helm. It was a magazine in the style of the great European magazines of its day. In the winter of 1934 it published an extraordinary issue devoted to 20th century art (with a work by the emerging Joan Miró on the cover), a special issue that was highly praised by experts and specialists in art around the world. It was a magazine that fulfilled two purposes: promoting the awareness of Catalanness among the elite sectors of society, and spurring the attention of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie toward the new cultural and artistic products. Nonetheless, what featured in the different sections of this magazine were topics and affairs related to fashion, news, sports, entertainment, vacations and tourism. It was a "Catalan showcase of modernity".³²

In turn, under the leadership of Manuel Brunet and Josep Cabot, the weekly *Mirador* took special care to cover the spheres of politics, society and culture; it dealt with them with rigour and a more conventional style targeted at the middle and professional classes. It was the best example of a great weekly targeted at broader swaths of the educated Catalanist bourgeoisie, and it was one of the best publications in Republican Catalonia.³³

The powerful promotion of Catalan journalists who modernised a professional scene that had been overly dominated by office-based column-writing prospered in this period in the history of the press. It is true that the tradition of academic articles and erudite criticism continued through the journalistic oeuvre of Josep Maria Capdevila (1892-1979) and Carles Riba (1893-1959), as well as through the "Tros de paper" section by Joan Oliver and the articles in the "Meridians" series by J. V. Foix (1893-1987). However, the more informative, modern experiences of Agustí Calvet, writing under the pen name of Gaziel (1887-1964), and Eugeni Xammar (1888-1973) as war and post-war correspondents began to come to the fore, along with those of Josep Maria de Sagarra (1894-1961) and the aforementioned Joan Crexells and Josep Carner, as occasional correspondents abroad, in addition to being outstanding columnists.³⁴

The journalists from the more mature ranks of this modernising generation included Joan Tomàs (1892-1968) and Sebastià Gasch (1897-1980) in their chronicles of the circus, dance, music hall, jazz, flamenco and film scenes; Manuel Brunet (1889-1955) in reporting; Carles Soldevila (1892-1967) in the mundane French-style column, elegant and ductile, ironic and distant; the priest Carles Cardó (1884-1958) in the modern Catholic apologetics; the novelist Francesc Trabal (1899-1957) with caustically humorous journalism with ties to the avant-garde and surrealism; the geographer Pau Vila (1881-1980) in accurate reporting on agro-livestock production and consumption; Joan Alavedra (1896-1981) in the first major experience of journalistic commentary broadcast on the radio; and above all, the vast oeuvre of Josep Pla (1897-1981).

Pla's complete works, which were eminently journalistic and later published in books, occupy more than 40 volumes and almost 30,000 pages. The South American writer and journalist Mario Vargas Llosa has stated that Josep Pla's "oceanic" oeuvre is comparable to that of the best American and European columnists of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Despite the secondary position to which columns were relegated by this generation, it is worth noting that the work in this genre of Agustí Calvet, aka Gaziel, clearly dovetailed with the tradition of "guidance" journalism started by Mañé i Flaquer in the 19th century, when as the editor of the newspaper *La Vanguardia* in the 1930s he set out to guide the liberal and conservative bourgeoisie of the country. However, Gaziel's qualities as a columnist were accentuated by his approach as a modern journalist, in both his efforts to organise and update newspapers, which he experimented with positively in the newspaper with the largest readership in Catalonia, and earlier in his exemplary chronicles as a war correspondent in the Great War and as a travel journalist.

Another personality from this generation who found success writing articles was the aforementioned Josep Maria de Sagarra in his role as the author of weekly sections in the newspaper *La Publicitat* and the weekly *Mirador*, entitled, respectively, "Cafè, copa i puro" and "L'aperitiu". Sagarra wrote veritable masterpieces of entertaining journalism for these newspaper columns. His journalistic prose was vital, vigorous, fluid, moderately provocative and dissenting, capable of garnering a cordial, appealing reception among readers.

We should also make special mention of the nimble, refined, concise style, a paragon within contemporary Catalan journalism, practised by Carles Soldevila non-stop in the press for 17 years in the more than 7,000 articles in the section called successively "Hojas de dietario" and "Fulls de dietari" published in the newspaper *La Publicitat* before and after the Catalanisation of this periodical.

However, it is widely accepted that Josep Pla is the most representative of the journalists from this historical peri-

od of changes in the press, and the most comprehensive of the Catalan journalists of his generation in terms of his cultivation of different writing styles. His long stint as a correspondent and special envoy abroad, as a Parliamentary reporter in Madrid during the decisive, turbulent years of the Second Republic and as a columnist and commentator on the everyday news in the post-war years bookended a long and wholly professional experience in which he was able to tackle all the new and traditional genres (chronicles, reporting, interviews, surveys, biographic sketches, criticism, news) but also humorous articles and vignettes of everyday life, through which he revived the old English tradition of Addison and Steele in the Catalan style, as well as the tradition of Montaigne and the French moralists.

Pla was a referent even among his younger peers. In the new generation that the three-year Civil War thwarted, at least in its integrity, Carles Sentís (1911-2011), Avel·lí Artís Gener, Tisner (1912-2000) and the ill-fated Josep Maria Planes (1908-1936) stood out for their pioneering contributions to Catalan investigative reporting on political and social issues. The restless Irene Polo (1911-1942) occupied a prime place in the profession even when she was still quite young as a courageous, innovative and imaginative reporter.³⁵ The influx of women into professional journalism, and not just occasionally, was one of the new developments in this period.³⁶ Andreu Avel·lí Artís, whose pen name was Sempronio (1908-2006), cultivated the citizen chronicle in the *Revista de Catalunya* in a highly personal way during the years of the Spanish Civil War. Josep Maria Massip (1904-1973) and Josep Maria Lladó Figueres (1910-1996) took on major journalistic responsibilities upon the outbreak of the war and revolution in July 1936. Josep Manyé (Jorge Marín) (1909-2000) took advantage of his early youthful lessons as a journalist in Barcelona to play a major professional role in Catalan- and Spanish-language broadcasts on the BBC in London during the difficult post-war years.

The modernising transformation and the avant-garde, in some cases represented by these journalists and the publications that hosted them, were the positive historical consequences of the regenerative spirit of the *Renaixença* which permeated companies and Catalan cultural initia-

tives from Modernisme to Noucentisme. In the field of journalism, these initiatives would lead to an exceptional professional efflorescence in the 1930s.

THE CIVIL WAR

The Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, triggered by the insurrection of General Franco and other military officers, and the simultaneous outbreak of a revolution initially dominated by the anarchists in Catalonia, seriously dashed the sustained growth and widespread stability of the press system that had taken shape from the early steps of liberal journalism in the mid-19th century until the appearance of an embryonic mass press in the early decades of the 20th century.³⁷

As a consequence of the political, social and economic changes in Catalonia after the 19th of July 1936, the right-wing or centre-leaning newspapers disappeared, even though many of them had nothing to do with the military insurrection or the objectives sought by that rebellious sector of the Spanish army to wage a war against the legitimate government of the Republic for three years. Examples of these included *La Veu de Catalunya*, *L'Instant* and the Catholic *El Matí*, all of them Catalanist, pro-democratic newspapers.

The revolutionary parties took over the headquarters of these newspapers and, if needed, their printing presses as well. *El Matí*, a newspaper founded in 1931 by Manuel Carrasco i Formiguera – and linked shortly thereafter to the Christian-Democratic Party (Unió Democràtica de Catalunya, UDC), which he led until he was executed by Franco's cronies – was expropriated by the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC), which was dominated by communists, in order to turn it into its journalistic organ which was renamed *Treball*.³⁸

Another radical change was the one that affected *La Veu de Catalunya*, the official mouthpiece of the Lliga Catalana, a conservative Catalanist party. It fell into the hands of the anarchist union CNT, which took advantage of its infrastructure to release a new title: *Catalunya*. Anarcho-syndicalism thus had a newspaper in Catalan, but only between 1937 and May of 1938, when it disappeared,



FIGURE 7. Masthead of the satirical weekly *El Bé Negre* (The Black Lamb) from the 8th of July 1936.

giving way to the Spanish-language mouthpiece of the leadership of the CNT, which had moved to Barcelona.³⁹

The PSUC also occupied the newspaper *La Rambla*, which had been founded with the slogan “Sports and citizenship” by the journalist and businessman Josep Sunyol i Garriga, the president of Futbol Club Barcelona. Sunyol was later gunned down by the Franco regime in August 1936 after being captured when he was en route to visit the Catalan combatants who were defending the Republic on Castilian soil.

In the Catalan-language press, the official newspapers of the ERC (*La Humanitat* and *Última Hora*) and the Acció Catalana Republicana (ACR) party, *La Publicitat*, survived with their own titles.

The newspaper *Las Noticias*, which specialised in local news, became the organ of the UGT, the union that until then had been predominantly socialist but which during the war years ceded ground to a new communist hegemony.

The *Diario de Barcelona*, with its longstanding monarchic tradition, was renamed *Diari de Catalunya* when it became the organ of the pro-independent organisation Estat Català, which had split off from the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) in May of 1936.

El Correo Catalán, a newspaper linked to the Carlists, was absorbed by *La Batalla*, the mouthpiece of the Partit Obrer d'Unificació Marxista (POUM).

Other Spanish-language newspapers that had kept a distance from partisanship during the years prior to the revolution continued to emerge with no more hurdles than those posed by the war, such as the paper shortage and the prior military censorship. Examples of these include *El Noticiero Universal*, *La Noche* and *El Diluvio*.

There were obviously no changes in the anarchist newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera*, the benchmark organ of the new political and social hegemony in revolutionary Catalonia.⁴⁰

Despite the changes in ownership and titles, the majority of the 36 newspapers in different cities around Catalonia in July 1936 continued to be published during the war, albeit under a great deal of duress.

La Vanguardia, the most influential newspaper during the Second Republic, went through its own twists and turns in terms of its ownership and operation between 1936 and 1939. The government of the Generalitat confiscated the company. The document that authorised the confiscation specified that because it was a “news periodical”, this newspaper had come to fall within the purview of the Department of Governance of the Generalitat de Catalunya. Defining *La Vanguardia* as a “news” periodical was particularly important in that context; the other newspapers, “opinion” periodicals, were not treated the same.

A few months later, as a consequence of the decree on collectivisations issued by the Generalitat on the 15th of November 1936, the internal power in that newspaper came to be exercised by a business board. One year later,

the collectivised *La Vanguardia* was given bylaws that officially defined the nature of the expropriated newspaper as an “*Empresa colectiva de producción y trabajo de duración indefinida*”. Later on, when the Spanish Republican government came to power in Catalonia, *La Vanguardia* became the official organ of President Juan Negrín until the fall of Barcelona.⁴¹

This final period of *La Vanguardia* was a harbinger of the fate of the entire Catalan press when General Franco's rebel troops occupied Catalan territory. The headlines of the *La Vanguardia* on Wednesday the 25th of January 1939 had the feel of a desperate harangue and pretensions of being an ingenuous oracle: “*El Llobregat puede ser el Manzanares de Barcelona*”. Yet the very next day, Thursday the 26th of January, the first troops from the Moroccan army corps fighting on behalf of the Spanish nationalists did cross that river. The same day that Franco's troops entered Barcelona, the 26th of January 1939, the *falangista* José Antonio Giménez-Arnau, the “*jefe del Servicio Nacional de Prensa*”, took over the reorganisation of *La Vanguardia*.

The democratic Catalan press was one of the greatest victims of the Franco regime. In 1939, the victors of the Spanish Civil War decided which newspapers were allowed to be published. In Barcelona, only *La Vanguardia* (starting the 27th of January with the addition of the adjective “*Española*” to the title), *El Correo Catalán* (starting the 14th of February, after a spontaneous issue on the 27th of January) and *El Noticiero Universal* (14th of February) were authorised under extremely stringent conditions.

They were joined by *Solidaridad Nacional* (14th of February), the newspaper of the new regime (the Movimiento Nacional) which occupied the old quarters of *Solidaridad Obrera*, the newspaper that had been the mouthpiece of the anarchist union.

Afterwards, in the early years of the new regime, the *Diario de Barcelona* (24th of November 1940) and *La Prensa* (28th of May 1941) appeared, the latter the night-time version of the Movimiento Nacional's newspaper. *El Día Gráfico* was first issued on the 27th of January under a number of conditions, but it was not authorised to continue publication.

The newspapers from other Catalan cities were banned, and the dictatorship released new ones, making use of the infrastructures of the old. In Girona *Los Pirineos* (17th of April 1939) emerged to replace *Los Sitios* (1st of January 1943), in Lleida *La Mañana* (20th of December 1938) was published, while in Tarragona the *Diario Español* (17th of January 1939) was issued, all of them from the pro-Franco Movimiento Nacional, as were other publications organised in the other cities of Catalonia.⁴²

In view of these developments, it is clear that the Catalan-language press was the twofold victim of the Franco regime within the Catalan press. It was a political victim, just like all democratic press, because it was subjected to the severe rigours of extreme censorship, and it was also a

national victim because journalistic expression in the Catalan language was totally nullified.

Therefore, the Franco dictatorship fully annihilated the purpose that journalism had served as an indispensable tool in the progress through the different stages in the discontinuous process of civic and cultural revival in Catalonia, a process from which we have taken too long to recover.

The close functional and instrumental ties between the journalistic system and politics makes it particularly vulnerable when there is a dictatorship.

The evolution of Catalan-language newspapers during this long period spanning 1868 to 1939 is quite revelatory of Catalonia's capacities in this sphere and of solid, genuine traditions that enable us to glimpse a future in which newspapers would remain the referent within the new constellation of media that includes the press, radio, television and the digital media.

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